

live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home, and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at M3.

Burn Awareness

Most burns are only minor injuries that occur at home or work. It's common to get them from hot water, a curling iron or touching a hot stove.

Types of Burns

There are several types of burns. The following are some of the most common:

- **Thermal** – Caused by contact with open flames, hot liquids or surfaces, and other sources of heat
- **Chemical** – Caused by contact with household or industrial chemicals
- **Electrical** – Caused by contact with electrical sources or lightning
- **Radiation** – Caused by the sun, tanning beds, sunlamps or X-rays

Serious Burns

Burns can range from minor to major. To distinguish the severity, the first step is to determine the degree and the extent of damage to the body's tissue. There are three main classifications for burns:

- **First-degree:** The least serious type of burn occurs when only the outer layer of skin is burned. It will appear red with swelling and pain.
- **Second-degree:** The first and second layers of skin are both burned. Blisters develop and

the skin takes on an intensely reddened, splotchy appearance and produces severe pain and swelling.

- **Third-degree:** This is the most serious kind of burn, involving all layers of the skin. Fat, muscle and even bone may be affected. Areas are charred black or dry and white. Difficulty breathing, carbon monoxide poisoning or other toxic effects may also occur when smoke inhalation accompanies this type of burn.

Caring for Burns

Minor (first-degree) burns usually heal with basic home treatment. Apply a cool, wet compress, or immerse in cool, fresh water until pain subsides. Cover the burn with a sterile, non-adhesive bandage or clean cloth. Take over-the-counter pain relievers, if needed.

It is important to call 911 and seek immediate medical help if the burn is of second- or third-degree severity. To help the burn victim until help arrives, you can follow these steps:

- **Second-degree burns:** Immerse in fresh, cool water or apply a cool compress for 15 to 20 minutes. Dry the burn with a clean cloth and cover with sterile gauze. Do not break the blister or apply ointments, as this could cause serious infections. Elevate the burn if in the arms or legs.
- **Third-degree burns:** Cover the burn lightly with sterile gauze or a clean cloth. Do not apply ointments as they can cause serious infections. Take steps to prevent shock, lay victim flat and elevate the feet about 12 inches. Watch the victim closely for potential breathing problems. Elevate the burned area higher than the head.



Did you know...?

Burns can range from mild to life-threatening. Some burns can be treated at home, but if of second or third degree severity, call 911 immediately. This kind of victim will require more care than can be provided without medical personnel.